

by [Medic's Wife](#) » Tue Dec 07, 2010 2:37 am

Hello, folks! My name is Beth Goodwin and I've been an Army Wife since 29 December 2009. While I've not got quite a year under my belt yet, I've immersed myself in as much learning and networking as I could do. Hopefully, I'll be able to answer most of your questions about Fort Stewart. My apologies as I've not included Hunter AAF in this post; HAAF Spouses - feel free to contribute! My home state is New Jersey, but before marrying my Soldier-Medic, I've lived in GA, AL, NC, and TX. I consider Atlanta, GA my adopted hometown since I spent a good 10 years there. I spent the past 11 years in Dallas, TX. Army post-wise, my first two months as a military spouse were spent on Fort Polk, LA before we PCS'd here to Fort Stewart in March, 2010. My husband is currently deployed and isn't expected home until sometime next summer, but R&R is coming. YAY R&R! I'll be following the format Mandy sends out in this topic: [viewtopic.php?f=47&t=890](http://viewtopic.php?f=47&t=890)

The Third Infantry Division (Mechanized) is proud to call Fort Stewart home. From our Team Stewart website:

Fort Stewart is the largest Army installation east of the Mississippi River. It covers 279,270 acres, which include parts of Liberty, Long, Bryan, Evans and Tattnall Counties. The reservation is about 39 miles across from east to west, and 19 miles from north to south. Stewart has it all: size, terrain, climate, and location. It's close to the East Coast, and two deep water ports: Savannah and Charleston, S.C. Tank, field artillery, helicopter gunnery and small arms ranges operate simultaneously throughout the year with little time lost to bad weather (<http://www.stewart.army.mil/about/history.asp>)

We also are home to some National Guard units and can accommodate about 50,000 reservists for their training needs (<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/...tewart.htm>).

Our Division is commanded by Major General Tony Cuculo, and our nickname is "Rock of the Marne", received during World War I. The 3rd Division, as it was called then, was placed along the Marne River near Chateau-Thierry and, while French troops retreated, our soldiers stood strong and beat back the German troops, thereby earning us the distinguished nickname. Our mascot is a bulldog named Rocky, since infantry soldiers are often called "dog-face soldiers". We also have our division song, "Dog-Face Soldier" and it is sung every morning after Reveille is played while troops are still in formation. You can find our song here: <http://www.stewart.army.mil/faq/DogFaceSoldierSong.asp>. Our Second Brigade Combat Team, the Spartans, made the famous "Thunder Run" from Kuwait into Baghdad during Operation Iraqi Freedom in early 2003. As you can see, we are proud of our history and our continued role as a rapid deployment post.

Our Army "home town" is Hinesville, GA - literally right outside the main gate. The seat of Liberty County, Hinesville has a bit over 30,000 residents, according to the 2000 Census. I'm figuring that figure has gotten a bit larger and probably does fluctuate depending on the various times of year when folks PCS in and out of Fort Stewart. We also seem to have a large number of service retirees who live in and around Hinesville, as well as closer up to Savannah. Convenient to Savannah and Tybee Island, Fort Stewart is also within easy driving distance of Statesboro (Home of Georgia Southern University), Brunswick and the Golden Isles of Georgia - Sea Island, St. Simon's Island, Little St. Simon's Island, and Jekyll Island. The closest major cities are Jacksonville, FL, located two hours to the south, and Atlanta, GA, located 4.5 hours northwest.

On-post housing is privatized and managed by Balfour Beatty Communities. We have 12 different neighborhoods located on the northern end of the post. We have a mix of old and new housing and neighborhoods are usually based upon rank and family need. Balfour Beatty also participated in an Army pilot program to provide better housing for single soldiers. Marne Point was built for single/geographical bachelor soldiers from E6-O4 and consists of 334 garden-style apartments. Renovations are ongoing for the rest of the older housing units and have been since November, 2003. Marne Terrace is fully unoccupied while demolition and rebuilding occur. Other housing areas receive either inside, outside, or a combination of both, renovations to improve the living conditions. Some of these quarters look to be about circa 1970, so work is being done to make improvements in the older living areas. We have 2 community centers, 2 spray parks, 63 tot lots, 4 playgrounds, 6 parks and green spaces, and 12 basketball courts located around the housing areas. For more information, you can look here: <http://www.fortstewartfamilyhousing.com...ghborhoods>

I live in Isenhower Terrace and I love it even though it is from about the 1970s. There is more closet space than I know what to do with and the inside has been renovated. Right now, my husband and I don't pay any extra for utilities although our entire BAH is taken out of his check each month. I have friends in Liberty Woods and have been informed that all of the new housing quarters do pay a portion of their electric bills

each month. Wait time for housing depends on family size, rank, and how many troops are deployed at the time of your PCS. For example, when my husband and I arrived in March, 2010, three brigades were deployed and many spouses had gone home to be closer to family rather than stay on post. We waited one week for our apartment to be ready; however, we also have no children and knew we would be placed in an apartment rather than a house. New quarters can range from a 4-6 week wait for a 3-BR house to as long as 6 months. My recommendation is to start a dialogue with housing as soon as you know you'll be coming to Fort Stewart so that they can give you updated wait times.

We currently have two full brigades home with one that will be fully home by the end of this month, so families have moved back and wait times will increase. By end of summer, 2011, all 4 brigades will be here and Fort Stewart will be in a 2-year downtime of no scheduled deployments, so housing on post will be tight. Balfour Beatty will place families of children under the age of 4 in a 2-bedroom apartment unless an EFMP need is requested. The sex of the children doesn't matter, so yes, your daughter and son will be sharing a bedroom until one of them hits age 4. That has come to be quite a surprise to many arriving on post to find out they're not getting the house that they requested. We also have mandatory recycling here on post and garbage cans specifically for recycled waste are provided to each resident quarters.

Fort Stewart does have a "no aggressive breed" policy for dogs, so you may want to check with Housing to ensure that your dog's breed is allowed on post. Other policies include:

- no hanging clothes or rugs on your balconies or over your back yard fences;
- no parking on the sidewalks or grassy areas in front of buildings;
- holiday decorations can be placed no more than 30 days in advance of the holiday and must be taken down the day immediately following the holiday;
- no rooftop holiday decorations;
- age-based curfews and in-home child supervision rules (punishable by UCMJ rules);
- quiet hours from 2200-0800 (no doing laundry, vacuuming, or creating a disturbance);
- permission to have an in-home business (except child care - that has it's own set of policies) must be received from Housing - this includes Avon, Mary Kay, Tupperware, etc. Door-to-door solicitation is prohibited.

Off post housing in Hinesville can be expensive, up to \$1200/month for a 3-BR house depending on the area of town. Because Fort Stewart was in line to get a fifth brigade combat team (which fell through), the post and Hinesville lawmakers worked out agreements for new housing areas conveniently located just outside the Airport Road gate. Called "Independence", these homes and apartments are new within the past 5 years and many have immediate availability. You can find information about The Columns at Independence here: <http://www.columnsapartments.com/TheCol...sheet.aspx> I wasn't able to get any of the housing development information. If you are willing to drive about 10-15 minutes away from post, you can find houses to rent or buy in quieter, newer developments along the outskirts of Hinesville. While Hinesville itself can be expensive, the outskirts have homes that can be rented or purchased for payments around \$800/month and up. Crime is an issue in Hinesville - 13 known gangs call the city home and some neighborhoods have higher rates of drugs, burglaries, and home break-ins than others. Many military families tend to live on the outskirts of the city where some developments are almost completely retired or active duty military and crime isn't as big of a factor out there as it is closer into town.

The towns of Midway, Ludowici, and Richmond Hill are also areas where families choose to live if they don't wish to live on Fort Stewart. Midway and Richmond Hill can be expensive. All three are within a 30 minute drive of Fort Stewart. Areas of Richmond Hill and Midway can run anywhere from \$1000-\$1300/month for a 2- or 3-BR house. Glennville is also about 30 minutes from Fort Stewart and some families choose to live out there. I wasn't able to get in touch with my Glennville folks to get ideas on housing prices. The rental/buying market all depends on the economy, how many folks are PCSing in or out of Fort Stewart, and how far folks are willing to drive back and forth from work or from needed facilities on post each day.

The Commissary gets a rating of 6. Their major faults seem to be the lack of fresh produce, vegetables, and meats, small aisles, and, at times, limited selection of goods. The produce and vegetable issues have been addressed by consumers numerous times,

and I don't place all of the blame on the distributors. Having watched some of the workers in those areas, I feel that much of the problem is the fact that selections aren't rotated; therefore, some things - like cartons of strawberries - can sit on the bottom of the display for so long all of the fruit is rotten. There are not enough carts that can secure two children, so families tend to use multiple carts - one for the kids, one for the groceries. If the spaceship carts are used to hold children and groceries, their width makes for difficult passing down the aisles on busy shopping days. For some reason, the Commissary feels the need to have a display of goods in open cardboard boxes going down the middle of most of the frozen food aisles and that always leads to cart traffic jams because it cuts the width of the aisle in half. Comparing prices to the local Wal-Mart, you will definitely save money on brand-name items if you shop at the Commissary.

They've also listened to customer request and brought in more organic foods and dairy products, gluten-free products, and organic health and beauty items. They have also increased the selection of locally grown or organic beef that is stocked. I do find that, depending on the day I go shopping, the meat selection can be limited and often times, I find that I'm purchasing meat that is so close to the "sell by" date that I've had it go bad in the fridge within a couple of days of purchase. I tend to buy my meat at the Wal-Mart because their selection is better and fresher, even though you save more money at the Commissary. Right now, there is an incredibly huge selection of German and Swiss foods and goodies out on the shelves for Christmas.

I rate the PX at a 7. The food court is pretty standard but I feel it is over-priced. The selection of clothing is fairly small to non-existent for women's plus sizes; however, if you don't need a plus size, you can usually find some cute outfits at good prices. While not a designated Coach store, the PX does offer Coach bags and fairly reasonable prices, along with brand-name cosmetics. I would like the book section to be a bit larger, and I'd prefer that the gun section not be right against the toy section for kids - that gets a bit awkward. Of course, my favorite is the Starbucks! However, inside the PX, Clothing Sales is large and has excellent stock in a variety of sizes. The beauty salon is surprisingly good in both skill of the hairdressers and price. Kiosks are plentiful and rotate about every couple of months, so there is always a nice selection of hand-made products from vendors who routinely come to Fort Stewart. We also have a GameStop and a GNC inside the PX, as well as a small alteration shop right next to Clothing Sales that will sew on patches or alter uniforms at reasonable prices.

I've given MWR a 4. While there are a great many offerings for families and BOSS-sponsored programs, those of us with no children have no activity selection from which to choose. The staff is often rather unpleasant and they tend to act as if they are being bothered when questioned about ticket prices or accommodations for trips offered. They are also quite difficult to reach by phone and they do not, at all, respond to emails. Suggestions or requests for married couples to be able to attend BOSS events go unanswered.

Army Community Service (ACS) rates an 8 in my book. They have a great variety of classes and the instructors are fabulous! I have yet to be disappointed in any course for

which I've registered. My only issue is that some of the reception area staff is less than pleasant, and since they are the first faces one sees when entering any of the ACS buildings they really need to brush up on their customer service skills. One of the perks of our ACS is that you can register for courses online and they also put their calendar of classes online for a 3-month time frame. They not only post the offerings at Fort Stewart, they list the Hunter AAF offerings as well.

Since I've been here, I have seen one invitation to attend a Spouse Club meeting so I'll have to call it inactive. If there is an active club, they only invite new members once per year and I never see any postings of their meeting dates/times anywhere on the Team Stewart website nor on any Facebook pages sponsored by Fort Stewart. Apparently, most folks here are active within their respective FRGs rather than the Spouse Club. Now that we have our brigades at home or in the process of coming home, there may be a bit more activity with the Club than the FRGs. Some FRGs tend to stand down or hold quarterly meetings when their soldiers are not deployed. If things change in this area, I'll post an update.

Things to do on post include camping, hunting, and fishing, swimming (seasonal), horseback riding, bowling, catch a movie, or spend some time at the day spa. Holbrook pond is popular in the summer for parties and cookouts. Screened-in gazebos can be rented if a group wishes to have a party out at the pond. MWR also rents paddleboats and has a facility there at the pond to make renting and returning easier. RV and boat storage is also at this facility. Because ponds and hunting areas are located within our live-fire training ranges, anyone who plans on being out to hunt, fish, or camp is required to let Pass and Permits know their date of arrival, location of camp, and date of departure so they can be sure to let the Range Control folks know to maintain everyone's safety. We also do have alligators in Holbrook pond (and surrounding ones), so if "no swimming" signs are posted, adhere to them! Some annual post events include Easter Egg hunts/rolls, July 4th festivals and concerts, Fall/Halloween festivals, and we just finished up with our post Christmas tree lighting and Holiday Extravaganza. Housed in the PX parking lot, live music was featured along with a skating rink and vendors selling holiday wares. Hayrides were also offered around post and two concerts topped off the weekend (Hinder and Ludacris).

Off-post, there's a wide variety of things to do depending on how far you wish to drive. Hinesville offers an annual Chili Cook-Off, Lunchtime Concerts in the Park, Oktoberfest, National Night Out celebration, a Christmas Parade, and an annual Blues and BBQ event. Savannah is one of the oldest cities in Georgia and offers all sorts of tours around areas of the city, including ghost tours. There are walking tours through the various parks offered depending on the time of year. The city also hosts a St. Patrick's Day party weekend and turns the Savannah River green in honor of St. Patrick. Pirate Fest is another popular city event held out on Tybee Island. Jacksonville is home to the NFL team Jacksonville Jaguars and tickets are available for most games. The Jacksonville Zoo is a popular day trip, and the city hosts a variety of concerts at venues located around the city. With an active nightlife, good shopping, and great restaurants, a weekend getaway trip to Jacksonville is a popular alternative to Savannah or the beaches along the GA coast.

Theater, ballet, and symphony offerings are popular things to do in either Atlanta or Jacksonville. Atlanta hosts the NFL Falcons, the NBA Hawks, the MLB Braves, and the NHL Thrashers. Concerts of all kinds are also found in Atlanta, as well as fine dining and a varied nightlife. Savannah hosts a minor league baseball team, the Sand Gnats - a Class A Affiliate of the NY Mets. For those who love baseball but don't want to drive to Atlanta, pay MLB ticket prices (or find your favorite game sold out), as well as book a hotel for one or two nights, a trip to watch the Sand Gnats is both a fun alternative to the Braves and much more affordable.

Information on area schools and colleges, as well as the rest of the topics listed in Mandy's post, will be added tomorrow. I have to get to bed - I have an ACS class in the morning.

**Rock of the Marne!**

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